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SOME OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FEUDAL JAPAN TO THE NEW JAPAN¹

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Feudalism as the ruling political machinery of Japan received its first imperial sanction about 1185. The long period from this date down to the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1868—an interval of nearly seven centuries—is popularly known as the feudal ages of Japanese history. This period may be divided into two, with the battle of Sekigahara fought in 1600 as the dividing point. The first part, about 1185 to 1600, witnessed a succession of civil wars, which occurred at first at long intervals, but, after the fourteenth century, continually and in growing intensity; the second part, 1600 to 1868, constituting a long reign of peace, coincides with the rule of the Tokugawa “Shōguns,” or suzerains, at Edo.

It is evident that so long a period of feudal rule could not pass away without making deep impressions on the national life and character of the Japanese. It is equally evident that the study of so colossal a subject as the contributions from feudal Japan to New Japan could not be compassed by any one student; and that even a very partial and cursory survey, such as I venture to present in this paper, of so vast a theme, could hardly be attempted without making serious omissions and without recourse to glaring generalizations.

To enumerate a few *political* contributions. It was under the feudal régime, that, late in the thirteenth century, Japan

¹Address delivered during the Clark University Conference on Japan and Japanese-American Relations.

repelled the Mongol invasions, and thereby saved herself from a possible foreign conquest; and that, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, she prevented dangers to her safety as a sovereign state that, it was feared, might come from the so-called "colonizing" nations of southern Europe, the Portuguese and the Spanish, by prohibiting their activity in Japan either in trade or in religious propagation. It was also under the feudal rule that, at the end of the twelfth century, Japan definitively reduced the two extreme northern provinces of the main island, Mutsu and Dewa, to submission to the central authorities; and that, four centuries later, she extended her suzerainty over the northern island of Yezo and the southern archipelago of Ryūkyū (Loo-choo). In short, feudalism created for Japan military forces such as the earlier bureaucratic régime had failed to give her, and, by this means, she was enabled to preserve her territory intact and to greatly extend it.

In matters of *culture*, also, the feudal ages made important contributions to Japan which a non-military society could hardly have made, in the form, among other things, of the Zen Buddhism with its extensive, subtle and profound influence upon national character and culture. It is true that the extremely rigorous methods of Zen were cultivated only by a chosen few who were capable of an intense and sustained application of the mind, and attracted even less followers in the peaceful period after 1600 than during the preceding epoch of civil strife. If the tenets of Zen were not popular, however, the spirit of Zen pervaded all classes of people, and directly or indirectly influenced all forms of Japanese culture. It was the spirit of reserve, collected force, and not primitive but deeply studied simplicity; it was a spirit which sought to compress the deepest meaning into the simplest form, and to put the most concentrated energy under the most perfect control. Zen both vitalized and chastened Japanese nature and its expression. This double influence may be amply seen in all the fine arts of the feudal ages—painting, specially of landscapes, calligraphy, architecture, and music; in all the martial arts; in literature; in the aesthetic and social taste and style; in customs and manners; and

in many details of common daily life. Zen, of course, was not the only controlling factor, but exerted its influence upon the Japanese side by side with other forces which had come down from the earlier ages and with still others which developed after 1600. Zen, however, constituted an ever-present ideal and heritage which is even now perceptible everywhere, and which could be developed only in so robust a feudal society as existed in Japan for seven long centuries. Zen is the great element of the Japanese character which has yet been the most inadequately interpreted to the outer world, and which, at any event, is perhaps the least intelligible to the American mind.

We cannot tarry longer on this point, for, important and precious as all these and other contributions are, and profitably as they may be enlarged upon, we are in this discourse concerned primarily with some other contributions of feudal Japan—with those contributions, that is, which have had a special bearing on Japan's activity as a *modern nation*. What does New Japan owe to feudal Japan that has promoted her national life under modern conditions?

Of some of the contributions of this character of which I may claim partial knowledge, it is possible to point out two aspects, moral and social. What peculiar *moral* life has been inherited from the feudal era, and what peculiar *social* organization had produced it and was sustained by it? The form of this question suggests, and the following discourse will show, how inseparably these two phases were bound up with each other; it is purely for the sake of discussion that I am obliged to divorce them one from the other as if they were not, as in reality they were, two sides of one and the same substance.

MORAL LIFE

The pre-feudal culture

The seven centuries of feudalism were preceded by about four centuries (794 to c. 1185) of court culture at Kyōto, the imperial capital. This culture was, in its essential characteristics, aristocratic, effeminate, and emotional. Its point of

view was mainly æsthetic, non-ethical; the denizens of the court, ladies and lady-like men, concerned themselves, not so much about the right or wrong of their conduct, as about the propriety and gracefulness of their behavior. Rather than asking *what* ought to be said or done under a given circumstance, they inquired *how* to say or do things approved by common consent to be good form and pleasing. Their culture was modal; while it excelled in grace and gentility, it lacked strength and variety. Its points of contact with the individual were dull and void of thrill, for it hardly touched his capacity for strenuous effort or self-denying enthusiasm. If you picture in your mind the French court life under the old régime as revealed in the memoirs of courtiers and in some of Dumas' novels, and in your imagination subtracted from this picture the qualities of dash and extravagance which were not absent in reality, you will have produced a likely replica of the court culture of the Kyōto of the tenth century.

The very religion in vogue had changed its nature: Buddhism had now become highly and elaborately artistic, and its ritualism developed to a point of complexity that has never since been equalled. This formal and æsthetic Buddhism was, in certain respects, further enervating the social fabric already enfeebled by the over-abundant culture of the time; it was absorbing the landed wealth and engrossing the personal devotion of the nation to an alarming extent. Had the condition been allowed to persist longer, Buddhism and Japan might not inconceivably have gone on corrupting each other, and in her archipelago history might have found another Ceylon or Tibet.

The feudal point of view

Fortunately this state of things obtained only at the capital. A step away from Kyōto, and everywhere over the land, one would see great social changes slowly but irresistibly taking place through the course of these five centuries, which were destined not only to save Japan from the fate that otherwise seemed to await her future, but also to enable

her to reconstruct the moral life of the nation on a radically new foundation.

For the first time in Japanese history there grew up a new class of warriors who were knit together by essentially personal relationships of fidelity and loyalty. For the first time, the men were inspired by a keen sense of individual honor, which they guarded with the sword; honor was valued higher than life, men staking their lives in contests for the honor of their lords, their families, and themselves, and even taking their own lives when it was thought that honor was irrevocably lost or that death alone could save honor. These two moral principles, personal fidelity and individual honor, were, as may be realized, needed by the very nature of the feudal society, and were cultivated by the men with incredible rigor. Then after the beginning of the feudal régime, these same qualities were put to a severe and sustained test during the centuries, first, of discipline, and then, of actual warfare, and thereby were much trained and tempered.

New Buddhism

New forms of Buddhism now prevailed among the warriors to meet their spiritual needs, for the old ritualistic forms, which once fascinated the courtiers of Kyōto, hardly satisfied the longings of the sworded men for virile doctrines and for direct roads to salvation. The Zen Buddhism, to which reference has been made, sought to gratify the former, and the Zhōdo and Nichiren the latter of these spiritual demands. Zen required a bold and intense mode of mental concentration. It was designed to break down the fetters that were said to bind the man to his blind and timid selfishness; it otherwise trained the disciple in the art of subduing obstacles that unenlightened mortals persist in throwing in their own paths, and of summoning one's mental and physical powers at a moment's call and bending them upon the execution of a given object in view. The methods of the Zhōdo and Nichiren sects were an antipode to those of the Zen; the former dispensed with self-discipline as a means of enlightenment, but taught an absolute faith in the saving power, respectively,

of a Buddha and of the truth embodied in a sacred book. It would seem that, before 1600, the robust methods of Zen gained greater popularity among the warriors than the gentle tenets of the other two denominations.

Confucian influence

To these spiritual factors were added, after 1600, moral teachings of Confucianism. They emphasized order and security to be obtained by the loyalty of the lower and the benevolence of the upper party in all human relationships, political, social and domestic. Of these relationships, the Confucianism adopted in the feudal Japan of this period considered as of first importance the relation between ruler and ruled.

The case of Confucianism affords a remarkable illustration of the truth, which is too readily forgotten, that no religious or moral doctrine that does not meet actual needs of society may be forced upon it; and that society in any given country and at any given period successfully adopts only such teachings as it has produced or has selected for their suitability to its material and moral welfare. Confucianism had begun to be studied in Japan at least one thousand years before 1600, but during this long interval there had been only individuals, not classes or communities, that accepted its more purely ethical precepts as their life-principles. That certain practical phases of Confucian ethics came to be universally studied in the feudal Japan in the late period under the Tokugawa suzerains was due to the general belief that they would serve now better than in any earlier age to secure the stability of the existing society; they were found to afford admirably clear and concise names and systems to the virtues that had grown up in Japan independently of Confucianism, and that had now been consciously employed, in a further developed form, as the foundation of the power of the feudal authorities and of the peace and order of the realm.

The Bushidō: History of its basic virtues

The code of ethics that resulted from the combination of these and other moral elements of the feudal ages is what is often called the "bushidō," the term familiarized to Occidental readers by Dr. Nitobe's interesting exposition. The "bushidō" was remarkably complex in its composition, for Japanese, Chinese, and Indian influences had contributed to its formation; yet it appeared singularly homogeneous and coherent, as its elements had been fused together during centuries of hard discipline and constant and universal practice.

Its foundation would seem to have been *loyalty*—loyalty to one's lord, or to any man or matter upon which he has set his heart—upheld by a sterling sense of personal *honor*.

Let us not forget for a moment, however, that the "bushidō," in its long history, was not always characterized by constant fidelity between lord and vassal. That there was a large element of opportunism among the "samurai" during the period of civil war (before 1600), manifesting itself too often in unnatural and revolting crimes of treachery and murder among men bound together by the closest ties of fealty or blood-relationship, may be seen by any cursory reader of the annals of these dark ages. The opening pages of the chronicle *Tō-dai Ki* present acts after acts that would parallel some of the blackest exploits of Machiavellian politics recorded of the sixteenth century Italy. That these enormities should be, as they were, perpetrated in Japan at the same time that noble acts of valor and loyalty were frequent, committed not seldom by the very same persons, suggests the deep interest of the social psychology of the time. And the same fact will also indicate the need of a *historical* presentation of the "bushidō," which has scarcely been attempted by any writer from a purely objective standpoint; it is obviously as impossible to present a true static description of so dynamic a growth as the "bushidō,"² as it would be to make

²Captain Brinkley's chapter on the "bushido" (*Oriental Series; Japan*, vol. II, chap. 5) appears to deal mainly with the two or three centuries prior to 1600, while Dr. Nitobe's well-known work (*Bushido*) seems to be based

a general analysis of Christianity that at once is true of any one period of its history and does justice to its central truths. The only conscientious method of describing any remarkable historical development would seem to be the historical one.

Were the changing phases of the "bushidō" studied in the spirit of seeking truth, it would be found, I think, that it was only after 1600 that the feudal rulers were, thanks to the peculiar social condition in which they found themselves, enabled at length to institute a rigorous and effective system of training designed to purge the "bushidō" as thoroughly as possible of the element of opportunism that had vitiated it. A tremendous machinery of education was it that was then elaborated with this object in view, but space forbids a description even of its larger features. Suffice it to say that this system of training proved remarkably effective in accomplishing its first aim, but somewhat at the expense of the true life and vigor of the historic code. Just as the exposition of the social ethics of ancient China by Confucius and Mencius was designed to compensate the actual decline of its practice then taking place by teaching an increased consciousness of its principles, so in a like manner the idealization and systematization of the "bushidō" in Japan under the Tokugawa shōguns indicated in fact a perceptible deterioration of its vitality. When the feudal classes learned to regard opportunism as hateful and unworthy of them, the whole body of this knightly code had become a little inflexible and punctilious. The long reign of peace after 1600, during which the martial arts were trained but not used, contributed to the same result in the "bushidō."

Even in this state, however, the "bushidō" was an immense potential energy; and it acquired an unexpected lease of life in the middle of the nineteenth century, when thou-

primarily on the perfected ideal code of the Edo period. Since they take up two different periods for the most part, these two works, mutually contradictory as their accounts may often seem, hardly correct each other. Nor may they properly be said to supplement each other, for, though largely concerned with different epochs, neither professes to be historical in method, but both treat the subject in a manner to lead the reader to suppose that they discuss it in its entirety. They serve, however, as valuable introductions to more accurate discussions of this subject which are still to come.

sands of men were suddenly animated by its thrilling power, and brought about the great upheaval that resulted in the destruction of the feudal régime. Feudalism was killed by the moral spirit it had nursed, when that spirit was liberated by revolution and fastened itself to the cause of national unity and imperial sovereignty.

Other factors of the "bushidō"

I have said that the "bushidō" was complex in origin though homogeneous in fusion. While its basic virtues were, it would seem, loyalty and sense of honor, it also was characterized, nearly at all times though in varying degrees at different times and in different persons, at least by the following moral tendencies:—contentment in simple material comfort, and disdain of lucre; the gallant surrender by the "samurai" of all that was of earthly value, including his very life, when it stood in the way of his fulfillment of a promised word of friendship and devotion, often resulting in sacrifices which would be considered unnecessary by Occidental observers; rigorous self-control and reserve; a habitually reflective and self-examining turn of mind, so that one's personal honor might be guarded, not with dense vanity and blind self-assertiveness, but with a clear conviction of its last irreducible claim; the habit of minute consideration and precise coördination of matters relating to the execution of any important plan of action—the training of a vision for the law of causality so habitual as almost to amount to a mental sport; the constant chastening of the mind so as to be able to meet more perplexing crises with greater coolness and assurance; the power to summon one's physical and mental resources at an instant's call, to intensify them if possible, and focus them on the consummation of one supreme act demanded by the exigency of the moment. To these must be added the delicacy of sentiment in regard to other members of society, attended not only by minute rules of etiquette, but also by quick adjustment of one's expression and behavior to suit different parties and varying moods and circumstances. The last but not the least factor, which had developed prin-

cipally among courtiers at Kyōto of the pre-feudal period, but which was cultivated in new forms throughout the feudal ages, was often called by the historic phrase, *mono no aware wo shiru*, literally, "to be sensible of the pathos of things," and in fact denoted a cultivation of the heart. It meant capacity for ready appreciation and cheerful response to a call for human sympathy; it manifested itself in intimate love of nature, in aesthetic enjoyment of the beauty alike of art and of human conduct, and in applause of the enemy's valor and sympathy for his fall. The fundamental unity of these apparently incongruous phases of conduct may be felt only by the aesthetic-moral sense of the "samurai."

The whole "bushi"

It should once more be emphasized that these component qualities of the "bushidō" were in practice considered seldom as separate elements, but as one coherent body of moral values, a veritable moral atmosphere which surrounded all "samurai" and which was imbibed by each. There was to be no specialization of the different virtues among different men, but each and every man was taught and expected to realize in himself, according to his nature and training, all of the virtues as a simple code of conduct. This was the ideal of the whole man in feudal Japan, and the ideal was taught and practised rigorously and with large success. You will appreciate the difference between those ages and ours as regards both the ideal and the degree of its realization. We fail to observe in this twentieth century any ideal for an all-round man which is attended by a social sanction more powerful than that of religion, or a universal inculcation and practice of any, even a partial, ideal which thrills and unites all members of society.

Skepticism and blind praise

It is difficult, therefore, for us to portray in our minds the actual state of feudal Japan animated by the "bushidō." And the very difficulty is liable to lead one to fancy either that all descriptions of the moral life of that society must be

grossly exaggerated, or that, on the contrary, Japan under the Tokugawa rulers must have been a paradise in which the virtues of fidelity and honor were in perfect practice. I am afraid that the first skeptical view is largely justified as a reaction against the current dithyrambic tales of Japanese feudal perfections; it, however, falls short of true criticism, since it does not consider the historical fact that the needs of maintaining the peculiar form of feudal society in Japan, especially after 1600, made it imperative that its units should, as far as could be accomplished through human agencies, be well-rounded men of the "bushidō." Otherwise the society would have been unstable and have readily succumbed to disintegrating forces.

As for the blind praise for feudal Japan, it is necessary to qualify it with the consideration that there were many lapses from the ideal, and that these were usually followed by a swifter and sterner chastisement than is agreeable for us to contemplate in this comfortable age.

The woman and the "bushidō"

The "bushidō," excepting a few of its leading traits, was essentially masculine and martial in origin and in character, but, as might be expected, it also changed the moral status of the Japanese woman in a fundamental manner. Her social position, compared with that of her sister at the court of Kyōto in the preceding bureaucratic period, would seem to have been materially lowered. No longer was she, as was her predecessor, courted by rivalling lovers with solicitude and deference; no longer did her feminine taste and views of life exert a controlling influence upon the customs and culture of polite society; no longer could she express without reserve her personal feelings and emotions even in her limited sphere, much less could she play a leading rôle in literary productions or in political councils. On the contrary, the social yoke under which she found herself was heavy beyond the conception of her elder sister. The feudal family had reinforced the right of the house-father, and the woman was again completely under the *manus*,

in turn, of her father, her husband, and his heir. Out in the public, the man prevailed, for thither the woman seldom ventured. Her sphere of activity was coëxtensive with her home circle, and, within this narrow horizon, her freedom of expression was curbed. She eschewed her personal opinions when they conflicted with the interest of the house or the public duties of her husband. The one commanding principle that ruled her from birth to death was self-effacement.

I fear such description will lead the foreigner, as indeed it has led many a well meaning observer, to the conclusion that the position of the woman of feudal Japan must have been one of unendurable misery. But it is a significant fact that, with the decline of her social status, her moral status rose immeasurably. Though seemingly more servile, she enjoyed genuine respect of the man to an extent unknown to her predecessor at Kyōto, for she performed an all-important moral service of which the latter could have no conception. Remember that the "samurai" was under constant discipline of fidelity and honor; his service was of arms, and involved, therefore, a possible sacrifice of his life at any moment. Every day as he left his home and mingled with the outer world, he should beware that any instantaneous call on his service must be met with clean conscience and untarnished honor. He should be absolutely certain that, if an unexpected death should overtake him, his wife would be able to control her grief, preserve her presence of mind, discharge the household obligations so abruptly thrust upon her, and rear her children in lessons of fortitude and honor worthy of their father. The great strain put upon her by the feudal society presupposed in her an adamant will. If the foreign critic must decry the social servility of the Japanese woman, he would do well to note that this constant demand on her moral courage exerted a thrilling influence upon the whole course of her life. Let him remember that, just as the social status of the Roman woman of the empire rose at the same time as their moral fibre weakened, so also, in a reverse process, the moral prestige of the Japanese woman of the feudal ages increased as her social freedom decreased.

Let the critic further consider that, but for her woman, feudal Japan could hardly have been what it was and have given to New Japan what it has. Since the woman was a tower of strength behind him, the man was enabled to go forth without care of home and do his work without the need of casting a backward glance. She effaced herself, so that he might serve his lord with honor; and he sacrificed his life, when need be, so that his lord might maintain his honor—a whole chain of duty and honor binding the entire feudal society. If one would criticize the Japanese woman, he should rather criticize the system of which she was so decisive a factor.

The chief defect of the "bushidō"

The chief fault of this social system, from the modern standpoint, may perhaps be found in its comparatively low estimate of the individual person. Not that, as superficial critics aver, the human life was cheap in feudal Japan; nor that the man as a being of honor was treated with a whit less respect and politeness than in our society. Life was dear; honor was dearer than life; and the man as the embodiment of honor had in a large measure been liberated from the thralldom of the clan and of the monotonous and non-ethical customs that in the preceding ages had stunted his moral individualism.

It seems essential to remember this great advance in the moral valuation of the individual man made in the feudal ages, as compared with the earlier period. It is, however, equally important to note that the feudal man was prized rather as an instrument of the "bushidō" than as a complex organism with his physical and mental qualities to protect or train, his special interests to serve, his temperament and predilections to cherish, his career to realize, and his personal character to develop. This organism would correspond to the individual person in the Occidental sense, who has survived all the levelling processes of the Middle Ages, has persistently asserted himself as an entity, and is actively developing his powers and remodelling his surroundings to subserve his interest. In comparison with his Western brother, the

Japanese "samurai" was conceived as a man largely in the abstract. The former is more individualistic; the latter was more impersonal, for he regarded himself essentially as a temple of honor. Aggressive self-assertion is the keynote of modern European civilization; self-control and self-sacrifice formed the pre-requisites of the Japanese feudal man. The more the "samurai" effaced himself and the more he lived away from his concrete individuality and lived in the abstract "bushidō," the more of a man he was held to be. For the society in which he lived was of such a nature as could be maintained only by the prevalence of this special view of life, and as could not engender a more individualistic ethics or prosper under its régime. Herein we see one of the real, great points of contrast between the modern Occidental and the feudal Japanese, not to say Oriental, civilization.

The question of the historical origin of this fundamental difference between the two civilizations is far too deep and complex for our comprehension. There is, however, no question to my mind as to the subtle and all-pervasive character of the effects of the contrasted points of view regarding the individual person upon the customs and morals, law and religion, in the respective spheres of the two civilizations. These effects, on Japan's part, will not be easily outlived, fast as she is adopting results of the self-assertive individualism of the West. Still do the Japanese retain some of their old reluctance to insist on their legal rights as against one another; still would they often yield their points and surrender their material interests rather than seeming to be too aggressive, for their fathers had been taught for generations to believe that nothing concerning one's own self alone, not even his rightful claims or high emotions, could be commendable. I have also witnessed cases of abrupt termination of friendships between Japanese and foreigners, to the complete amazement of the latter, when the former had silently and too long endured what seemed to them the selfish and mean insistence by their foreign friends on their feelings and interests, though the offence had been unintentional on their part and in no way touched the personal interest of the Japanese; these would as much disdain the seeming selfishness

in others as in themselves. The divergence of attitudes may sometimes result in less pathetic events. Who among you, for instance, have not experienced moments of surprise at the peculiarly impersonal and mechanical manner in which your Japanese acquaintances sometimes regard individuals and their affairs? In much the same manner that you yourselves often fall into the mistake of treating Japanese as general representatives of a race rather than as specific persons, the Japanese, on their part, may regard you perhaps as instruments of the occasion of contact and feel little or no genuine interest in your personal places in the human world. If they show you politeness and even have respect for the position you hold or the cause you advocate, you may not be certain that they also feel real interest in you as distinctive entities.

It would be a serious error to exaggerate the impersonal side of the Japanese attitude and to forget the existence of the reverse side in which devotion and sense of honor commanded all personal energy in their service. This latter aspect was the saving grace of the Japanese; indeed, it may have been largely responsible for the other, impersonal traits. Here the contrast between the Japanese and their neighbors, the Chinese, is instructive. If the Japanese had not been, as they were, trained in the school of loyalty and personal honor, had not been imbued with the hatred of opportunism, and had been obliged to fall back solely upon their non-personal view of life, there would have been little difference between them and the Chinese. The great quality of the Chinese would seem to be their dispassionate utilitarianism; the corresponding virtue of the Japanese was, it is clear, their sense of loyalty and honor. Witness how they continue to astonish the world now and then by the readiness with which they sacrifice their interest for causes they regard as necessary and honorable.

Nor should we be blind to the reverse of the picture. If the utilitarianism of the Chinese is sometimes liable to lead to crimes of opportunism, the Japanese habit of mind must inevitably conduce as often to acts of relentless coercion of others as to deeds of noble self-sacrifice. When the ruling

part of the nation sets its heart upon the execution of a great policy, the remaining part would be carried forward, whether cheerfully or reluctantly, along the common path of devotion and sacrifice. Illustrations of this kind of compulsion have not been absent in Japan in recent years. One has only to imagine this state of things, not as occasional, but as universal, during the feudal ages; the "samurai" were not only inspired with an abnormal sense of their own honor and fidelity, but also expected even the peasant and merchant classes to uphold it with enforced loyalty. Naturally this system frequently led to frightful abuses: honor as often cost freedom as earned it.

SOCIAL LIFE

Moral and social

The moral principles of the "bushidō," however instructive in theory, could neither have been the living force that it was in feudal Japan, nor have made the invaluable contributions that it has to the national life of New Japan, had it not been born in the heart of the feudal society, and had not, as a filial child, gratified the exact social and spiritual wants of the age. The "bushidō," that is, was neither grafted on Japan by a foreign propaganda, like the Catholicism of the sixteenth century, nor copied from abroad, like the Buddhism before the ninth century, nor yet formulated by a few men, like the Shintō of the Yoshida schools. The "bushidō" grew, as customs usually grow; it was the spirit of a great part of the compelling customs that struck root in that feudal society which itself continued to grow for at least seven centuries. Though the "bushidō" absorbed moral influences of Indian and Chinese origin, it selected them with extreme deliberation, and no alien factor made a permanent impression upon it which it did not completely and thoroughly assimilate to itself.

It falls far beyond the scope of this paper to present a full social interpretation of the "bushidō," but the following brief description of the social organization, not of the entire

feudal period, but of its last two and a half centuries under the Tokugawa rule, an epoch nearest and most intimately related to the new era, might be of some use. The description might perhaps aid you to appreciate something of the vital relation of the "bushidō" to the society which reared it and depended upon it; you might also feel prepared for the discussion, which you will meet later in this paper, as to how, after the end of the feudal régime, the "bushidō" adjusted itself to the changed social conditions of New Japan.

The Tokugawa policy and the two social classes

Few things were originated in the Tokugawa period, 1600 to 1868, either in feudal morals or in feudal institutions, but to it were handed down results of the moral and institutional growth of the past four centuries of feudal history. And these results were skillfully organized by the rulers into a great polity which, combining in itself, as it did, both feudal and absolutist principles in a masterly coördination, enabled the Tokugawa shogunate to endure in apparent security for more than two and a half centuries. The primary aims of this régime were: first, to prevent the recurrence of the civil war that had troubled Japan for ages, but to insure the peace and stability of the realm; and, second, thereby to perpetuate the political control of Japan in the hands of the house of the Tokugawa "shōgun." In the execution of this double policy, the two great social classes that had come down from the earlier period, the "samurai," or warriors, and the "hyaku-shō," or peasants, were carefully but in a natural manner so organized as to balance and offset each other's rights and obligations, and to substantially contribute to the peace of the land and the power of the rulers. Each class was accorded a rigid place in the whole social scheme, the "samurai" ruling the peasants, and the peasants supporting the "samurai." Neither was a caste, as the division of the classes was never absolutely insurmountable; each had, however, inherited its own customs and morals largely different from those of the other, and each was, in a different way from the other, granted a measure of autonomy,

and enjoyed, after its own fashion, the paternal care of the authorities. The keynote of the rule of both was Discipline, though it bore upon them in widely different ways. Let me illustrate these points by a brief survey of the organization of each class.

The peasantry

The peasant population, numbering probably twenty to twenty-five million men and women, formed the bulk of the nation. Though it was given no share in the government of the whole country, its social and economic position had greatly improved under the peculiar conditions that obtained in Japan during the century prior to the rise of the Tokugawa shogunate. The Japanese peasant of 1600 had in fact acquired a higher status, both in public and in private life, than the medieval serf of Europe: he had become the practical owner of the land he tilled, though his freedom of selling it was restricted; and he had learned step by step the art of the self-government of the village and the joint responsibility of the villagers. They usually selected village chiefs out of their own number, and often organized themselves in smaller groups within the village for the purpose of mutual aid and correction. The Tokugawa rulers utilized these customs and organs that had grown up among the peasants, elaborated and extended them throughout their own domains, and enforced the will of their government largely through the village institutions thus established. The example of the domains of the "shōgun" was also followed in the fiefs of the "daimyōs," or barons, so that by the end of the seventeenth century, the principles of village administration had become fairly uniform throughout Japan. Each normal village had its five-man groups, its peasant chiefs and councils, its regular mass meetings, its graded system of responsibility—the individual peasant to the group, the group to the village, and the village to higher authorities—and its constant vigilance and quick response to calls for mutual support.

All this freedom of the self-government of the village was, however, but a part of a carefully wrought system of paternalism which the Tokugawa rulers had devised for the entire

rural population of the country; the villagers were permitted to administer their own affairs even more completely than they had been wont to do, only in order that they would thereby be induced to submit all the more readily to the general policy planned for the whole of the productive classes of the nation. The peasants were to be satisfied and submissive; to be honest, diligent, and mutually helpful, as also patient and obedient. Agriculture was encouraged, but the peasant was restricted in his choice of the crops he would raise on his land. He virtually owned the land he cultivated, but was forbidden to sell or divide it beyond a certain acreage which must remain in his possession; natural economic causes, which I shall not discuss here, also helped to insure the small holdings of the peasant against the aggrandisement and eviction by his wealthier neighbor. In other words, the peasant should be neither too rich nor too poor; in fact, the land held by the average peasant was so small—so evenly small—that he could support his family only by dint of the most intensive farming and utmost toil and frugality.

In appraising this paternal-autonomous system of village government, one should not forget that its main object was, as I have already stated, to secure the peace of the country and thereby to perpetuate the political power of the Tokugawa. From a system built upon a principle in which the selfishness and the patriotism of the rulers were so closely blended together, one might well expect results neither wholly beneficial nor entirely harmful to the nation. The Japanese peasant emerged from the feudal period with little or no active interest and training in the conduct of the larger affairs of the country, but with the sterling virtue of industry, with a remarkable capacity for discipline, and with a secure though diminutive holding in land. We may see later in this paper some of the direct bearing of each one of these important results on the life of New Japan.³

³ I venture to refer the readers specially interested in the condition of the peasant population in this period to my "Notes on Village Government in Japan After 1600," which began to appear in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* in June, 1910.

The "samurai"

To return to the social organization under the Tokugawa. Over the supporting class of peasantry was the ruling class of "samurai," numbering, with their families, probably less than two million souls. Like the peasants of the villages, the sworded men under the one suzerain (shōgun) and the nearly three hundred barons (daimyō) of this period were, in ways different from the peasants but upon principles similar to those of their governance, granted a large measure of autonomy, and yet were controlled by a carefully built system of responsibility and paternalism. The barons of the fiefs ("han")⁴ were practically absolute princes in their respective territories, but any flagrant case of misgovernment on their part, or of internal dissension or family scandal, or an act of disobedience to the "shōgun," was swiftly and sternly punished by the latter's council. Likewise, the retainers of each baron, who were well organized for the enforcement of discipline and responsibility, enjoyed large freedom in the management of their own followers; yet they were accountable to their lord, not only for failures in their duties or disgrace to their honor, but also for any serious error in the conduct of their own household. The punishment of the "samurai," of whatever grade, consisted in enforced self-confinement, confiscation of the fief, severing of the ties of allegiance and support, or self-immolation.

Everywhere in this vast scheme were in operation effective devices of checks and balances, of responsibility and super-

⁴ This word, *han*, is habitually translated, by both foreign and Japanese writers in English, as "clan." But the basic principle of the organization of any clan is blood-relationship, while the *han*, like the fief in the feudal history of Europe, was essentially territorial. Neither in the relation between the lord and the bulk of the people of the *han*, nor in the relation between the people themselves, there was and could be no semblance of any actual or traditional tie of blood. To call a *han* a clan is to confuse two radically different forms of social evolution and social organization, the distinction between which is familiar to every student of history and sociology. It is remarkable how sometimes, as in this example, the human good nature permits transparent errors to gain currency before it awakes to see the great harm they have done. It is urgent, for the sake of truth, to discontinue the prevalent use of the misapplied and misleading term "clan" in speaking of an organization which was to all intent and purposes a fief.

vision; and everywhere was made, with much success, a constant appeal to the sense of personal honor and the dictates of the "bushidō," which have been discussed in an earlier part of this paper. A little reflection will show how well such a moral life fitted the social form of the time; it is equally easy to see how well this whole system must have subserved the cardinal aims of the Tokugawa rule, namely, to prevent the recurrence of civil strife, and to prolong the political control of feudal Japan by the house of the "shōgun."

THE END OF THE FEUDAL AND THE RISE OF NEW JAPAN

The fall of the feudal rule

We have seen, I trust, some features of the old order of things in Japan which should guide us in our understanding, not only of the feudal period, but also of the transitional and the new age that followed. Wearisome as it may seem, I venture to reiterate the first aims of the Tokugawa rule: namely, to restore and maintain peace and stability, and to stake upon the success of this policy the very tenure of the power of the "shōgun." It was largely with a view to carrying out this double policy, that the founders of the régime made the skillful use of the existing social conditions that we have seen, elaborating and balancing them in a manner to compel our admiration for the statesmanship of the authors of the policy.

The student will be struck with the peculiarly half-selfish yet half-disinterested nature of this policy. Still more remarkable, there is evidence that these statesmen actually foresaw that, inasmuch as they had built the power of their descendants upon the degree of the efficiency of the government of the latter in maintaining the security of the realm, they might some day be obliged to forfeit their power, should they fail in this primary function of administration. That time arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century: a sudden access of pressure from foreign powers made it then patent to progressive men that, under the radically changed conditions, the old régime of the shogunate was no longer

adequate to pilot the ship of state against the tidal wave of national upheaval and international struggle that rose so ominously before Japan. As a matter of fact, the council of the "shōgun" rapidly lost its control even over the feudal classes. Indeed, its vision of the real situation confronting it was too long obscured by its natural desire to conserve its own interest. The "shōgun" awoke at length, only in 1867, to the fact which had become evident to freer thinkers in the previous fifteen years, that, if Japan would persist as an independent state, she should frame a more centralized form of government than feudalism. After this period of convulsion, therefore, the voluntary surrender of the Tokugawa rule and what is known as the restoration of the imperial government supervened, as we all know, in the years 1867 and 1868.

The old forces in transition

Who would dare say that this revolution could have been accomplished so successfully as it was, had it not been for the social-moral system that had been maintained under the Tokugawa? The "samurai" class, with its habitual hatred of opportunism and its ever present ideal of self-denial and loyalty, was happily suited for assuming the leadership in the new movement for national unity. The sworded man, who had for generations been taught to value his personal honor higher than his life, was able to leave all meaner things behind and to march straight to his new goal, regardless of the obstacles and perils that would have daunted a man of mere courage. On the other hand, the peasants, docile and well-disciplined for centuries, formed an exact type of population to be led by the new leaders and to support the new rulers. The transition from the feudal to New Japan came about, therefore, with a tremendous upheaval on the part of those "samurai" who had awoke to advanced ideas of national welfare, but with hardly a shock to the placid mind of the peasantry. The former experienced a sharp conflict with the more conservative "samurai," each side leaving records of thrilling acts of heroism and loyalty; the peasants passed from the old age to the new,

scarcely shedding a drop of their blood. The same condition has characterized the first few years that followed the revolution of 1868, when Japan, old as she was, was still but an infant as a modern state struggling for existence against the aggressive brother states of the West. The old "samurai" were able to lead, and the old peasants, to be led.

How different would have been the fate of Japan if the feudal ages had not provided her with the peculiar social and moral system that it did! If the "samurai" had been individualistic and utilitarian, there might perhaps have been an ultimate change in the existing order of things, and even—though this is doubtful—a progressive career of the race under modern conditions, but there could hardly have been the united, seasoned, and purposeful advance of the nation as a political body that has characterized Japan since the revolution. Likewise, had the peasants been critical and individually self-assertive, it seems extremely unlikely that the nation could have safely steered through the many crises, domestic and foreign, that have often appeared about to overturn it, united as it actually was. I believe that there would have arisen internal dissensions imperilling the very existence of the state.

It is well that there is variety in the ways of political salvation of nations: China's greatness as a race, as has again been strikingly demonstrated during the past months, as also throughout her historic ages, seems to consist in her largely impersonal sense of opportunism and utilitarianism. That remarkable quality may carry her through the present crisis. As for Japan, she has saved herself from an impending dissolution and possible foreign conquest by the qualities of fidelity and discipline that had been trained in different forms in her two social classes. From this standpoint, one might almost say that the feudal régime was destroyed by the very forces on which it had rested for centuries, as soon as they were set free by a national crisis.

The new age—amalgamation

We may now move a step further from the transitional epoch that followed the downfall of the Tokugawa, and enter into the new age proper, which may be said to date from about 1875. How have the social and moral forces bequeathed from the feudal period operated since that time? It will be remembered that the two great social classes had, during the earlier ages, grown so separately and acquired such distinctive characteristics from each other, as to seem almost to be castes. Their views of life were divergent, and their interests were largely independent and in part even antagonistic. Hence, there was in Japan no "nation" in the strict sense of the term. This state of things proved convenient, as I have suggested, at the transitional epoch, and materially contributed to the triumph of the principle of new centralization over that of maintaining the decentralized feudal régime. It was, however, evident to the more thoughtful men that the very ideal of unity, upon the realization of which the future safety of the nation seemed to them to depend, would be meaningless so long as the two classes remained as far apart as before. There might be coherence, but hardly unity. The late Dr. G. W. Knox once related to me the following story which he had heard personally from the mouth of Count Itagaki. In 1868, when the "shōgun" had lost his power, Aizu was one of the fiefs in northern Japan that remained loyal to the memory of their suzerain and held out against the new government. The army of the latter, marching northward, invested the Aizu castle so closely that loyal peasants of the vicinity could no longer bring provisions to their lords who defended the castle. After they had exhausted their wits in attempting to communicate with the besieged, the simple rustics finally presented themselves before the staff officers of the besieging army, and begged them kindly to forward their tributes to the castle. Though all were impressed by the loyal sentiment of the peasants, Itagaki alone, who was present, could not help thinking in the following vein. This act was commendable merely because it was done by peasants, for "samurai" would be

expected to fight to the last man before they appealed to their enemy for help; so long as the ethical standards so radically different in quality applied to the two classes, and so long as the lower was not raised to the level of the higher, the nation would be incapable of competing with the energetic Western powers.

Ideas like these dawned early on the mind of many a patriot, though in varying degrees of clearness. The very five-article oath pronounced by the young emperor in 1868 at the beginning of his reign foreshadowed the general principle. Both of the old classes were capable of a high sense of public service, but one, whose fathers had lived on hereditary status and had not been obliged to earn their livelihood by productive work, was economically imbecile, while the other class, having for ages been deprived of full opportunities to emulate the condition of the "samurai," was morally and intellectually undeveloped. It was necessary to enlighten both, but it was first of all urgent to let one impart to the other the virtues of the old "bushidō," and to let them together learn lessons of economic and other material adjustment. The immediate ideal was, therefore, as complete an amalgamation, physical and moral, of the two former classes as could be achieved by human foresight and effort. The life of the new nation should be based upon a careful welding together of the legacies that had come down from the feudal ages; out of their fusion should grow a great middle class, or a precursor of one, that should constitute the backbone of the new nation. Other things should come after and with this result.

Though it was only a part of the colossal work of reconstruction that entailed upon the imperial government, the proposed amalgamation was in itself a great task, requiring utmost care and skill. It is impossible for me even to refer to all the larger measures that have been made and the more serious errors committed in relation with this work during the last three or four decades. There will be critics who would deplore the following, for instance, as among the errors—the creation of a peerage consisting of the old court and feudal nobility and of newly appointed peers, which is not

in all cases limited in term, but is for the most part hereditary, constituting a perpetual social burden imposed upon the posterity; the introduction of a distinctly bureaucratic spirit among officials, a spirit which may be readily copied even by a private large organization or clique of whatever character; the inflexible and somewhat intolerant system of education of government schools in a country in which private institutions of instruction should be welcome to supply the excessive deficiency of the public ones, and which can ill afford the more or less antagonistic feeling that the system is breeding among an increasingly large number of persons against the official education; and the much criticized management of public finance which, though it has thus far insured the state against really serious embarrassments, has not prevented an inflation of the currency and a rapid increase of the cost of living, with the attendant social unrest. On each of these points, however, opinions might honestly differ. On the other hand, among the successful agents for the amalgamation of the old classes may be mentioned the following—the same system of national education, and the system of military training—the two great practical schools in which class distinctions are totally ignored and knowledge and merit alone rule; the grant of a conservative but expansive political franchise; and the growth of national wealth and of the general economic life of the people, the last factor especially leading also to a new social alignment. To these forces, I cannot help adding the great international events that have involved the nation in neighboring regions and on the American continent, which have served at once as tests and as lessons for the cohesion, the disillusionment, and the self-reliance of the nation.

Whatever may be one's opinion of the forces that have helped or hindered the amalgamation, there will be little question as to the large degree of its success. In their love of the country and devotion to the sovereign, which are new forms of the "bushidō," and in their growing ambition for their welfare, both individual and national, the Japanese people of today are to a remarkable extent homogeneous. And the lines of demarkation that are indeed being drawn

in their society with increasing distinctness are results of a new economic evolution, not a repetition of the old order of things. Amalgamation is already being followed by new division.

The emperor

There is yet another institution to be considered, the importance of which in our discussion is supreme. To speak of the feudal contributions to New Japan without reference to the institution of the emperor would be like drawing an eye without its pupil. This institution was not, to be sure, created during the feudal period, but, though antedating it, has been, as we shall see, deeply affected by social conditions of the feudal ages.

As a matter of fact, the emperor was, in the first place, the very founder of Japan as a body politic; and then, in the seventh century, when her society was in danger of a possible foreign conquest and a certain internal dissolution, saved his tenure as sovereign by taking radical measures of reconstruction, and thereby saved Japan as a state.

By this time, the foundation of the position of the emperor as the historic ruler of the country seems to have been firmly established. Although, during the seven long centuries of the feudal rule, his political power was almost totally eclipsed by that of the suzerain and his barons; although, in the second half of the sixteenth century, he was even reduced to a state of unspeakable penury; and although, when his material condition improved after 1600, his sovereign rights were hardly less nominal than before—yet it is a remarkable fact in Japanese history that not even the most rough-handed suzerain ever for a moment presumed to replace the emperor as the titular sovereign. Throughout the feudal period, the emperor continued to command the implicit deference of all classes of people as the sole fountain of official rank and courtly honor; no suzerain's title was valid who had not received imperial investiture. Nominal as its control was and varied as its career had been, the emperorship had after all proved to be the oldest and most enduring, as well as the most exalted, of Japan's political and social

institutions. Even at the depth of his poverty and helplessness, the emperor had never ceased to be a sacred and inviolable personage.

From this state, he rose suddenly to a commanding position when, in the last years of the shogunate, the movement for national unity was begun and carried on swiftly to triumph. The emperor was at once conceived by the followers of this movement as its soul; and, on the success of the cause, he was universally regarded as the center, the incarnation, of national traditions and national aspirations, embodying in himself Japan's past history and future destiny. The old principle of loyalty, tried and vitalized as it had been during the feudal ages, had now been disengaged from its feudal ties, and took up the emperor as its common object of expression. For many years after the so-called restoration of 1868, therefore, loyalty to him and patriotism to the country were thought to be interchangeable terms. As time advanced, his councillors have carefully nursed the general trend of the national mind to regard the emperor as the embodiment of the great policies of the nation. Otherwise these policies, however wise, would have lacked sufficient authority and dignity to enlist the undivided devotion of the people that they have shown.

Why is it, then, that the Japanese emperor has not turned a despot? In the constitution which he granted to the nation in 1889, he asserts in clear terms that the sovereignty of Japan rests in his hands, not in those of the people; that the cabinet is responsible to him; and that the national assembly, explicitly designated "imperial" diet, is not an independent law-making organ, but a helpmate of the emperor in his legislative capacity, even the representative character of the lowerhouse being considered its incidental, rather than essential, characteristic. Would it be safe for Japan to have such an autocrat over her, constitutional though he is now said to be? The answer is that the Japanese emperor has never been despotic, and no one can fancy by any stretch of imagination that he ever will be. Let me not essay to convince you of the truth of this assertion, for it seemingly contradicts the universal human nature, and otherwise may

not be fully proven without an extended discourse. Let it suffice to point out rather dogmatically what might otherwise be logically demonstrated—some of the probable historical reasons for this extraordinary state of things relative to the Japanese emperor.

Both the emperor and the people in their attitude toward him have acquired in the course of Japan's long history a strongly marked common habit in their conception of his political power. Before the seventh century, when the organization of the state was largely tribal, with the emperor as the patriarch of the whole tribe, he was accustomed to regard the people in a paternal spirit, not as a tyrant, and their attitude toward him was deeply colored with something akin to filial sentiment. This mutual feeling, as of father and children, has, despite the important changes that have since occurred in the status of the emperor, come down from the ancient period, and is manifest to this day. With the seventh century began a highly artificial bureaucratic régime modelled after the Chinese polity, in which the sovereign, so far as his *political* life was concerned, was placed in a position in which he was bound to assume a largely impersonal attitude, his councillors bearing the major part of the responsibility of the government. Social and religious forces, none of which we have space to discuss here, also strongly contributed to this tendency. This bureaucratic period, which lasted for more than five centuries, is full of significant lessons of human history; and among them must be mentioned the gradual establishment, in addition to the older patriarchal sentiment, of the principle of what I call, for lack of a better phrase, the *political* impersonality of the emperor. Politically, that is, he must not assert his personal preferences and predilections, and, if he has a strong will, it must be exercised, not in translating it into positive deeds born of his own convictions, but in sinking his idiosyncrasies, and in sanctioning and giving effect to the counsels of responsible advisers. Such a mode of conduct would appear to the Occidental mind to indicate a weak individuality, and it cannot be denied that there were weak sovereigns; I content myself here, however, with suggesting that the world is wide

and contains many viewpoints, and that circumstances favored the very strongest of the Japanese emperors of the period to regard this principle of their political impersonality as wise and to act accordingly. Then during the subsequent seven centuries of the feudal régime, except in the brief space of 1333–1336, the emperor was politically so completely overshadowed by the suzerain that he could not, if he would, assert his personal will. You may readily see that this state of things, continuing for so long a period, must have powerfully confirmed the historic principle of the imperial political impersonality.

This, then, is the unwritten law much more than a thousand years old, that, socially, the emperor and his subjects shall treat each other with family-like attachment, and, politically, he shall be impersonal and let properly constituted authorities act as his responsible ministers. If this law is not committed to writing, it is older than any written law in existence in Japan, and also immeasurably stronger, even as the fundamental laws of the English constitution are strong though unwritten.

And the strength of the Japanese principle has been greatly increased by the promulgation of the constitution in 1889. Though it does not verbally refer to the principle, the constitution has firmly established the regular organs—the diet, the cabinet, the privy council, and the judiciary—through which the fundamental principle should operate in the future. The constitution, when examined closely, ceases to appear merely as another product of the blind imitation of Occidental civilization on which Japan is said by some to have built her new career. The idea of having a written constitution is Western, as also are the prototypes of the diet and other new institutions, but the broad principles underlying them will be seen to be very largely Japanese. The sovereign remains socially gracious and politically impersonal. The government by his cabinet and privy council still retains a large degree of the old paternalism, which depended more on the wisdom of the rulers and the unity and continuity of their policies than on the fluctuating suggestions of the people; the door has been opened only partially to the influence of the Western

idea—by no means the only political idea that humanity is capable of conceiving, and an idea whose merit is still under trial—that no one's interest would be considered who has no representative to fight and assert it. And the opening is so carefully controlled that it must widen only slowly with the increase in national wealth and political experience. In other words, the late Itō and the other framers of the constitution have elaborated it in such wise as to *train* the self-governing capacity of the nation, rather than *exercising* it before it was mature. The emperor, while reserving the theoretical sovereignty in his hands, has thus deliberately founded his future power upon the gradual training of his subjects, which shall at once be promoted and tested by means of his constitutional organs. The whole structure of the new régime may, therefore, be said to legalize and define the great national principle that has a history of many centuries. Thereby, it would seem, even the remotest possibility that might have hitherto existed, if at all, of the violation of the principle by a willful sovereign is to all intents and purposes eliminated.

From this point of view, it is most fortunate that, in the extremely important formative period since 1867, Japan has been blessed with an emperor who in temper and in training typifies what her constitutional sovereign should be. Frank and generous but highly conservative, the reigning ruler has loyally supported the policies of the nation as interpreted by his gifted advisers; and then, when the wealth and education of the middle classes were sufficiently advanced, he sanctioned the grant of a political franchise which is so designed as to be shared by a greater and greater portion of the people automatically with their progress in knowledge and material welfare. Future historians will be able to appreciate better than we the great confirming influence which the present reign will have exercised upon the constitutional career of New Japan in its very first decades.

CONCLUSION

We have now completed a general survey of the vital relation of feudal Japan to New Japan. In her we behold a well-disciplined, coherent nation which, with its steadfast common aims, and with its conservative but expansive constitution—all revolving around the Emperor as the heart and soul of the united existence of the nation—distinctly constitutes a strong organism and powerful moral force. Its activity thus far at home and abroad is a matter of common knowledge; its future cannot help bearing a vital relation to the history of mankind. But this nation could hardly have become what it is, had it not been for the fact that it has built itself largely upon the social and moral forces that have been contributed to it from the feudal period.

I conclude this paper by asking a few questions which its subject touches but does not include. May New Japan, made up at least in part of the elements and depending on the training of which I have given an inadequate analysis, be said to possess all the essential requisites to fulfil its functions as a state and as a society? If she has thus far proved a success as a state among states, will she be equally efficient in her duties to her individual sons and daughters? Will the latter be always as loyal to her as they have been? Does the foregoing discussion suggest the existence in her system of any ominous gap which time may widen into serious proportions, or do you discern in reality signs of coming difficulties already inferable at this date?